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Ames passed polygraph

WASHINGTON (AP) — Accused CIA turncoat Aldrich H. Ames passed agency polygraph tests twice during the time he is suspected of working for Moscow, and the Senate Intelligence Committee plans to review the agency's internal security.

Meantime, the CIA suspects that secrets allegedly sold by the former counterintelligence officer led to the deaths of at least 10 Soviets working for U.S. intelligence, according to one official familiar briefings.

In an effort to detect traitors, the CIA tries to administer polygraph tests every five years to its employees, but there have been backlogs.

Ames, alleged to have worked for the Soviets and then the Russians from 1985 until his arrest Monday, was tested on schedule without his spying being discovered, according to a government official, who, like the others, declined to be identified by name. Those tests occurred in 1986 and 1991, according to another official.

"Doesn't the machine work? Or is it that easy to beat?" asked a congressional official who had been advised of Ames' passing the tests. "That's one area the Senate Intelligence Committee will be looking at."

One of the government officials said successful polygraphing depends on the questions.

"They ask you if you are a spy. It's about that blunt," said the congressional official.

This official said the committee also has questions about CIA and FBI cooperation on the case. CIA Director James Woolsey and Attorney General Janet Reno have hailed the cooperation.

Cooperation has been fine the past couple years, the congressional official said, but the government doesn't have a clear idea of the investigative effort from 1986 through 1991, a period when Ames far outspent his salary.

Government sources have said the Ames investigation began two years ago, but suspicion that a Soviet mole had penetrated U.S. intelligence was aroused in 1985, the year that ex-CIA agent Edward Howard defected to the Soviet Union while under FBI surveillance.

The Senate panel also wants more information about exactly how and when Ames was recruited by the Soviets, including any role his wife may have played.

In August 1985, Ames married Maria del Rosario Casas. When he was stationed in Mexico City during 1981-83, she was a cultural attache there for Colombia, her native land, and a paid CIA source.

Her attorney, William B. Cummings, said Thursday she is "devastated by the distortions, out-of-context, selected statements and alleged quotations in the government's affidavit along with the subsequent press coverage." Cummings statement did not address a report by a government official that she had begun cooperating after her arrest Monday.